

Pioneer New River Schoolgirl*

by Lula Marshall Pallicer

I Lula Marshall Pallicer, first came to Fort Lauderdale in September 1895, when I was eighteen months old, with my mother, my sister Sally, and my two brothers Mack and Frank. Four months earlier, my father had come by wagon and mule with a colored man named Fink, from Panaskjee, Florida. My father had an orange grove there that was killed in the freeze of 1895.

We travelled by train to West Palm Beach and then by boat to Fort Lauderdale, where we were met by my father and Fink. It was raining and dark. And, there was still one and a half miles to go up New River to our home. Everywhere that we looked, it was a wilderness. There were no houses, no lights, just the Stranahan Trading Post where, eventually, we would buy our candy and all our supplies. But my mother, the daughter of a pioneer, soon adjusted to this new life.

Although my father, Lewis W. Marshall, was born in Hahira, Georgia, and my mother in Kentucky, they met in Texas. My mother's name was Elizabeth F. Sharp, but everyone called her Betty. There were seven of us children in all. Two of my sisters, Rhoda and Mozelle, died in early childhood. Mozelle, the only daughter to be born in Fort Lauderdale, was named by Mrs. Stranahan. I remember that Mrs. Phil Bryan brought some pretty dresses as a gift to the new baby Mozelle.

Thomas Howard White of the White Sewing Machine Company sold my father 360 acres of land, one and a half miles up New River where it forms a whirlpool at what is known as Marshall Bend, south of the Davie Boulevard bridge. On this land he built us a house which faced the river.

My father's occupation was raising produce, mostly tomatoes, for the northern market. Every year he brought

families from Georgia to help as sharecroppers on the farm and furnished them with a house. During season he shipped from one to two carloads of tomatoes each day.

I recall my mother telling me about the Indians who came to our home in canoes when I was a little girl. My hair was blond and the Indians would point their fingers at me and laugh because all their children had black hair. When my mother was alone she would take us children and hide in the palmettos until they went by because she was afraid. At night the Indians would come by and call out, "White man, white man." And when my father wouldn't answer, they would say, "White man holo-wagus," which meant "good." They would also take tomatoes and leave bird eggs.

* See "Behind the Scenes," inside front cover.

My father built us a summer home in Hahira, Georgia. He thought that it was too hot here the year 'round and that the mosquitoes were too bad. Each year we would leave Fort Lauderdale in May and return in November. One of the highlights was riding on the train. My mother would pack a lunch and we would drink all the ice water from the cooler because we didn't have ice on the farm.

When I was about four years old my father, sister Sally and I had yellow fever. This was when the epidemic was so bad in Miami and Cuba but, thanks to the health doctors from Miami, we all recovered.

My mother lived for months without speaking to a white woman. Then, one Sunday my father hitched the mule to the wagon and we drove four

miles to the Hinkley place in Dania, where we spent the day with Mr. and Mrs. Joe Joyce, who became lifelong friends. When my parents went to Miami on business they would leave us with Mrs. Joyce to spend the night because the train made only one trip a day.

The next family to move to Fort Lauderdale was that of Mr. and Mrs. Ed King and their four children: Bird, Louise, Wallace and Eleanor, who was my best girlfriend. There was a six month difference in our ages. Mrs. King was a good influence on my early life.

Then came the most important time in our lives, that is, the beginning of the first school [1899] with Miss Ivy Cromartie, who was our first school teacher. I was sent to school when five

and a half years old to comprise the nine children required for the establishment of a public school. The others were my sister Sally and my brothers Mack and Frank; Bird, Louise and Wallace King; and Minnie and Edgar Bellamy.

I remember that Miss Cromartie, later to become Mrs. Stranahan, taught us from a big chart; the first lesson was "I see a cat." I was so happy to learn to read. Another recollection is that she asked me how many fingers I had. I was so proud to say "ten," but I was wrong. She corrected me, eight fingers and two thumbs. That was a lesson I never forgot.

As the years went by more families moved to Fort Lauderdale. Just to name a few of the men, they arrived in this order: Mr. Lewis W. Marshall; Mr. William Marshall; Mr. Ed King; Mr. Powers; Mr. Jack Marshall; Mr. Phil Bryan; and Mr. Bellamy.

As the community grew, we needed a church. The census of 1900 credited Fort Lauderdale with a population of fifty-two. My father helped organize the First Methodist Church in 1903, which began in the school house at South Andrews Avenue and SW 5th Street. This is where almost all the people would come to worship.

For amusement we would visit with our friends or go on picnics and to the beach. Big brother Mack was our protector when we walked to school. If it rained, however, we went by boat. A few years later, my sister Hattie fell into the river while I was playing on the bank. I happened to see her and called for help. Our brother



FIRST ROW, left to right: Minnie Bellamy, Wallace King, Lula Marshall, Tenley Bellamy, Sally Marshall, Edgar Bellamy. SECOND ROW: William Powers, Mack Marshall, Vasco Powers, Louise King. THIRD ROW: Cora Powers, Irma Bass, Ivy Cromartie (Stranahan), Byrd King, Frank Marshall. (Fort Lauderdale Historical Society.)

(SCHOOLGIRL, continued, p.28)